

- 20 -

default colours or zoom-lens size to optimise visual comfort and effectiveness for that user; an admission clerk's display may be limited to an interactive weave guiding the acquisition of admission data, and not extend to a weave assisting in treatment selection; a doctor may modify the symptom/disease relations in a personal copy of the knowledge base effecting the display generated for that doctor; a medical system administrator may modify the knowledge base or image generation rules affecting all users. (The administrator might choose or be directed to bring a particular disease to the clinician's attention even where the evidence acquired so far makes its presence possible but unlikely, on grounds of public policy).

While the medical embodiment described above is 'patient-oriented', with the display showing actual or possible symptoms for one patient (or, in research, for a group of patients), treatments considered or used for that patient, and so on, an administrator concerned with available beds, test scheduling, isolation requirements, etc, needs a 'resource-oriented' display. This may be constructed in an analogous fashion, using a knowledge base of resources and resource-requirement relationships, together with data from current patient records.

Now that a preferred embodiment of the DataWeaver method and system have been described in detail, it will be apparent to persons skilled in the computer systems arts that numerous variations and modifications may be made to the method, in addition to those already described, without departing from the basic inventive concepts. For example, the form in which intersections between overlapping ribbons are represented in the weave map may vary considerably from that described depending upon the particular application context. Also, in the above mentioned example, the method of entry of information by a user is with a mouse. It is envisaged that voice recognition could be used instead of or in addition to the use of a mouse. All such variations and modifications are to be considered within the scope of the present invention, the nature of which is to be determined from the foregoing description and the appended claims.

- 21 -

THE CLAIMS DEFINING THE INVENTION ARE AS FOLLOWS:

1. A method of visually representing in a computer generated graphic image the relationships between single items or groups of data, the method involving:
- 5 generating a first elongate ribbon in a form suitable for graphic display in a first visually distinct manner;
attaching a first item or group of data to said first ribbon;
generating a second elongate ribbon in a form suitable for graphic display in a second visually distinct manner;
10 attaching a second item or group of data to said second ribbon;
generating an intersection for a point at which said first and second ribbons overlap by weaving the two ribbons in a visually distinct form suitable for graphic display; and,
displaying said first and second ribbons on a display means
15 together with said intersection;
wherein said intersection is used to provide a visual indication of a relationship between the first and second items or groups of data that can be readily ascertained by viewing the displayed graphic image.
2. A method of visually representing data as defined in claim 1, wherein said first ribbon is one of a plurality of ribbons forming a first ribbon group, and said first item or group of data is one of a plurality of first items or groups of data attached to the respective first ribbons in said first ribbon group.
- 20 3. A method of visually representing data as defined in claim 2, wherein second ribbon is one of a plurality of ribbons forming a second ribbon group, and said second item or group of data is one of a plurality of second items or groups of data attached to the respective second ribbons in said second ribbon group.
- 25

4. A method of visually representing data as defined in claim 3, wherein said intersection is one of a plurality of intersections which together with the ribbons form a weave of said first and second ribbon groups.
5. A method of visually representing data as defined in claim 4, wherein said first ribbons are displayed in a different colour from said second ribbons.
6. A method of visually representing data as defined in claim 5, wherein said first ribbons overlap one or more of said second ribbons in a substantially perpendicular manner.
- 10 7. A method of visually representing data as defined in claim 6, wherein said plurality of ribbons within a particular ribbon group can be generated with varying degrees of thickness and height dimensions so as to convey additional information about items or groups of data represented in said particular ribbon group.
- 15 8. A method of visually representing data as defined in claim 7, wherein said first ribbons are displayed on said display means in a substantially horizontal orientation and said second ribbons are displayed in a substantially vertical orientation.
9. A method of visually representing data as defined in claim 1, wherein each intersection can be generated in one of a plurality of visually distinct forms so as to indicate a plurality of distinct relationships between said first and second items or groups of data.
- 20 10. A method of visually representing data as defined in claim 9, wherein, in addition to a simple one over one under form, said intersection can take one or more of the following visually distinct forms: one ribbon passes through a single slit in the other ribbon (over-through-under); one ribbon passes
- 25